

Poblano rings

3 fresh poblano chiles
3 cups vegetable oil, or as needed, for frying
1 cup all-purpose flour
Salt
2 large eggs, beaten
2 cups panko bread crumbs
3 tablespoons ground dried guajillo chile or ground chipotle powder

Place the poblanos directly over a gas burner on medium-high heat. Using tongs, turn as needed so the chiles can char evenly. The chiles will turn black and look burned; this should not take more than 5 minutes because chiles can turn soft and release water if cooked for too long. Transfer the chiles to a resealable plastic bag and let steam for about 5 minutes. This will allow for easier peeling. Peel the charred skin off the chiles and slice into ¼-inch rings, discarding the stem.

Heat the vegetable oil in a large, heavy saucepan until a deep-fry thermometer inserted into the oil reaches 350°F. (If you do not have a thermometer, test the oil with a piece of bread crumb, which should sizzle when it touches the oil.) Meanwhile, arrange three bowls in an assembly line: one of them with the all-purpose flour seasoned with about 1 teaspoon of salt, another one with the beaten eggs, and the third one with a mixture of the panko bread crumbs and ground guajillo.

Carefully dredge the poblano rings in the flour, making sure not to break them. Shake off the excess flour and soak in the beaten egg. Then cover with the panko-guajillo mixture.

Fry in the hot oil until crisp and golden in color, about 2 minutes. Remove from the oil and set on paper towels to drain the excess oil. Season with salt while the rings are still warm.

I really think this is one of the best dishes I've ever come up with. Cut crosswise into rings, poblanos make for the perfect onion ring and a killer replacement for onions on your burger. I can eat a whole basket of these with just a mix of mayo and chipotle or even tartar sauce. To char the poblanos, you might need to try it a couple of times before you master the technique. You're looking to char them completely, but if you overdo it, they might get too soft or disintegrate, making it hard to cut them into rings. In fact, for this recipe it's okay to undercook them slightly. Peel off as much of the char as you can, but it's fine and even adds flavor if you leave some of the charred bits.

Casa Marcella: Recipes and food stories from my life in the Californias Cookbook